

Counsel's Accusations Fit Mosaic of Evidence

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Many of the most pointed accusations made by John W. Dean 3d today before the Senate Watergate committee fit smoothly into the mosaic of direct and indirect evidence on the scandal.

The broad political espionage campaign, the initial proposals to wiretap telephones at the Democratic National Committee headquarters and the campaign to cover up the scandals are all there.

The former White House counsel did meet with President Nixon on the days he said he had, and he talked with such ranking White House advisers as H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John N. Mitchell.

It was largely in the context of these familiar names and familiar events that Mr. Dean spoke, but there were different slants to conversations, wider knowledge was attributed to others and "inside" details were added.

By direct statement, by hearsay and by his interpretation of events, Mr. Dean, as had been expected, calmly and methodically drew Mr. Nixon and his senior advisers into the conspiracy at various points.

'Raised This With Me'

Practically all of his most damaging testimony has been denied already, but the denials have frequently been general ones. The recollections others are sometimes qualified or seem to involve other occasions.

For example, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, has denied on Mr. Nixon's behalf that the President ever promised executive clemency for any of the men indicted and convicted in the Watergate plot.

The question had been brought to the White House shortly before the Watergate trial in January by E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the seven who were charged, through his lawyer, William O. Bittman.

Mr. Dean said Charles W. Colson, then special counsel to the President had taken Hunt's appeal to Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's domestic adviser, who had "said that he would have to speak with the President."

"On Jan. 4," Mr. Dean said, "I learned from Ehrlichman that he had given an affirmative regarding clemency for Hunt." He went on to say that Mr. Nixon "raised this with me" at meetings on March 13 and April 15.

On March 13, Mr. Dean said, the President "referred to the fact that Hunt had been promised executive clemency," and on April 15 the President said it may have been "foolish" to discuss the issue directly with Mr. Colson.

Other Testimony

Information obtained from the White House by the Senate committee and published last week confirms that both meetings between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Dean took place, but it is silent on any discussion of clemency.

Mr. Colson has acknowledged that he was approached by Mr. Bittman and that he was willing to "help" his old friend Hunt, but only in a legitimate way and not to the extent of obtaining clemency from the President.

Other testimony on the clemency question strongly suggests that the offers were made in January and that at the time Mr. Dean, at least, thought that they had been approved by the President.

The former counsel to the President directed a one-time aide, John J. Caulfield, to prom-

ise clemency to James W. McCord Jr., another defendant, and Mr. Caulfield has told the Senate committee that he did so on several occasions.

Mr. Caulfield quoted Mr. Dean as having said then that the offer came from the "highest levels," and while Mr. Caulfield testified that he had been cautioned not to invoke the President's name, he felt Mr. Nixon was the source.

The White House and Mr. Dean agree that on March 21 the President met with Mr. Dean and heard, as the Administration put it recently, his counsel's "theory of what had happened."

Mr. Dean said today that he "began by telling the President that there was a cancer growing on the Presidency and that if the cancer was not removed that the President himself would be killed by it."

The published information obtained from the White House by the Senate committee differs substantially. It portrays Mr. Dean as leaving out a number of points and as sounding uncertain about others.

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"After I finished," Mr. Dean said today, "I realized that I had not really made the President understand because after he asked a few questions he suggested that it would be an excellent idea if I gave some sort of briefing to the Cabinet."

Mr. Nixon announced later, on April 17, that as a result of "serious charges" brought to his attention on March 21 he had ordered a new investigation of the Watergate affair and that major developments could be expected.

'Commenced No Investigation'

"... the President commenced no investigation at all," Mr. Dean countered. "Rather, the President, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman commenced to protect themselves against the unravelling of the cover-up."

Mr. Dean's accusations against Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman are often difficult to judge because, among other things, the two former White House advisers have refused to discuss many events after the June 17 Watergate arrests.

They adopted this stance during sworn depositions taken from them by lawyers for the Democratic National Committee in connection with its civil lawsuit the Nixon campaign organizations. Their lawyers argued that events after the arrests were irrelevant to the suit.

Both men said they had had no prior knowledge of the Watergate operation, as Mr. Dean also said, and they indicated only a vague knowledge of subsequent activities.

For example, Mr. Dean said today that Mr. Haldeman had ordered an aide, Gordon C. Strachan, to destroy documents such as "documents relating to wiretap information from the Democratic National Committee."

Mr. Haldeman said in his pretrial deposition that he had questioned Mr. Strachan and had been told there were only about three documents that might be sensitive and that none dealt with the wiretaps.

This version seems backed up to an extent by the Senate testimony of Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy director of the Nixon re-election committee, an acknowledged recipient of the wiretapping data.

Mr. Magruder told the committee earlier that he had regarded the reports as so sensitive that he had not transmitted them to the White House but instead had called Mr. Strachan to his office and let him read them there.